

FIRST STEPS IN READING

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*Letters to a
Beginning Teacher*



LUCY WILLIAMS TINLEY



Class L 715

Book 13

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THE FIRST STEPS IN READING

FOR

THE BEGINNER
THE RURAL SCHOOL TEACHER
THE PRIMARY TEACHER
THE INTERMEDIATE TEACHER
WHO DOES NOT KNOW WHAT
WORK PRECEDED HERS
THE MOTHER WHO WISHES TO
TEACH HER CHILD TO READ
ANYONE UNFAMILIAR WITH
THE FIRST STEPS IN
READING

By

LUCY WILLIAMS TINLEY

Author of Teaching Beginners to Read

1918

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INTRODUCTION

Learning to read is a complex problem. But this problem must be solved by every one who would have the avenue of approach to the larger world. Reading is the key that unlocks the storehouse of knowledge. To teach children to read is a fine art — an art too little understood by many — yes, by most teachers.

It is the purpose of this monograph to aid the mother in the home and the teacher in the school to solve that difficult problem, teaching children to read. This message goes forth from the pen of one who has been a successful teacher in the school room and in the home. Out of the abundance of her experience and devotion to her cause, with sincerity of purpose she gives this message to the beginning teacher. The author, through definite and concrete suggestion, shows the teacher how she may make her pupils thoughtful, expressive, fluent, and independent readers. Not all the work is done for the teacher. But sufficient direction is given to encourage and to stimulate the teacher who is struggling with the problem of teaching beginners to read.

The author is not a slave to any particular method. She discusses briefly five methods so that the teacher may get her bearings. She states her aim clearly and tells how the goal may be reached. The message is well founded pedagogically and psychologically. No unusual equipment is required to follow out the plan of the author.

JOHN H. BEVERIDGE
Superintendent of Instruction
Omaha, Nebraska.

FOREWORD

Any volume published in this day of many books should have a reason for being. The excuse for this one may be found in Bulletin 623* published by the United States Bureau of Education. This bulletin yields the interesting information that one-third of the teachers who enter the rural schools of this country have no professional training whatsoever, and of the remaining two-thirds, many know nothing of primary methods.

Only the experienced teacher who has watched the stumbling progress, the deadened interest and the early departure from school of the pupils who have made a bad start can realize what this means. The oppressing thought of little children deprived of their right to a good beginning, and a sincere desire to help the inexperienced teachers who so sorely need it, prompted the writing of the following pages.

The methods given lay no claim either to novelty or originality. On the contrary many

* Efficiency and Preparation of Rural School Teachers, by Harold W. Foght.

of them have stood the test of time. That these letters may reach the one who needs them and prove an inspiration and guide till the time when she shall form methods and standards of her own is the earnest hope with which they are sent forth.

LUCY WILLIAMS TINLEY.

COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA.

THE FIRST STEPS IN READING

My dear Elizabeth:

I can scarcely express the happiness which your letter gave to me. To think that you should be called to the very work which I have left! I lay my mantle upon your shoulders, my dear, and may it be the joy to you that it has been to me.

Your appeal went straight to my heart, for two weeks is a painfully inadequate time for preparation for your work. I am surprised that they assigned you the beginners, but I am glad — so glad. Being the first teacher is next thing to being the mother. You do not have to build on some other person's efforts. For your work, good or bad, you alone are responsible. This lack of preparation will make it harder for you, but you will study and I will teach you, and we will do our work so well that your little ones shall not suffer for it.

You say that you know absolutely nothing of teaching children to read. To quote exactly, I believe you said, "I would not even know how to teach a child the letter A." Fortunately,

my dear, you will not be expected to do anything so difficult as to teach a child the letter A. The letters of the alphabet, so simple to us who are familiar with them, are meaningless forms to a child. You must surely be familiar with that psychological law which leads us to teach all new or unknown facts by associating them with something already known. This is the one fundamental principle in the teaching of reading, and the more closely you abide by it, the more easily obtained and successful will be your results. So, instead of using a letter whose name means nothing to one who is not familiar with its symbolic significance, we choose either a simple sentence, such as, **I like my doll**, or a known word, preferably one which suggests something pleasant, as **bird, flower, mamma, apple**. Through the mental picture which it suggests children learn a word much as we learn to know and remember a face. We know that the faces which we remember best are the ones which held our attention through some particular interest, and in just the same way interest is the keynote in learning new words.

It is not wise to give the children books till they have learned a few words. The first work should be presented from the blackboard. Secure a copy of the primer which you are to use

and make a list of the first fifty words. These are approximately what you will teach before taking up the books.

Perhaps it will be easier if I plan your first few lessons for you. These plans will serve as guides for the ones which you will compose for yourself later on.

THE FIRST LESSON

For the first lesson provide yourself with a large red ball. When the class is ready show them the ball. Lead different ones to talk of it — its size, color, use. Then proceed something after this manner:

Who can read? What! Is there no one here who can read? Too bad! I know some lovely games we could play if you could only read.

You would like to read, wouldn't you? I thought so. I believe you could read if I were to write something easy enough. I'll just write:

"See my ball," here on the blackboard. You can read "See my ball," can't you?

Who can read

See my ball?

They will all be ready to try it, you may be sure, and after several have read the sentence add another.

See my red ball.

Now allow the children to read both sentences. Then ask who will find the word that says **ball**, the word that says **my**. Next write **ball**, **my**, **see**, and **red**, in different places on the board and have the children compare and name them. They will catch the idea and by the time the lesson is over most of the class will be able to pick out the four words.

For this first board work some teachers print the words and some use script. It really does not matter which you use first for you will soon be using both anyway. I use script, as plain and round as I can make it. If you print well, you can soon have the children recognizing both forms of a word, but if you do not print well you had better let it alone, as it will only mean teaching them a third form.

Of course you understand that you might use **doll** or **box** or **book** or any other word instead of ball for your first word. I merely chose that because it is a familiar and pleasing object and the word occurs in most primers.

Next lesson repeat the first and add the sentence: **See my blue ball.**

In another lesson, after careful review, add:

I like my ball.

I like my red ball.

I like my blue ball.

In a similar manner use **flower, leaf, green** and **yellow** in your sentences.

You will find word cards a great help in fixing new words in mind. Provide an envelope for each child with his name written upon it. Rule sheets of manila board into spaces, of a size suitable for word cards. (About $\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$ inches.) In these spaces write the words which the children should know, on one side of the card in print, on the other side in script.

These cards may be printed by hand or if you have access to a ten cent store, you can get a little printing outfit of what is called "Primer Type" that will be a great help in this work. Cut the cards apart, and put about five copies of a word in each envelope.

At first, children may arrange the words in columns upon their desks, having a column for each word. Later you will add new words to the envelopes and the children may be taught to build them into sentences.

FIRST WORK IN WRITING

Your first work in writing or rather your preparation for it may begin any time. If you have never taught a beginner to write, you will be surprised that little fingers could be so awkward. For your first preparatory lesson write

some familiar word upon the board, writing it very large with letters about six inches high. Suppose for instance that your first word is **nut**, which is an easy word for beginners. Step back from the board and say, "I have written 'nut' upon the board, now I will trace it in the air." Trace it several times, then let the children trace it with you. Erase it and say, "Now we will trace it without the lines to guide us."

Not many will be able to do this the first time, but a second trial will give better results. Children who merely copy a word pay little attention to its form, but if they know that it is soon to be erased they look at it with different eyes.

After tracing a word in the air let them try tracing it upon their desks. After they are familiar with a few words, play a game by standing with your back to the class, tracing a word in the air and have them tell what you have traced. Soon individual children will be able to come before the class and trace words for the others to read.

You will find this tracing a great help in fixing in mind the new words of the reading lesson. Do not confine your work to separate words, but trace the same short sentences that you use in reading.

After two or three weeks of these exercises give the children pencils and paper. They now have a definite idea of what writing really means, though you will still have to teach them the use of the pencil, the size of the word and its position on the page.

This will start you on your way. By the time you need more assistance it will be ready for you.

Your loving Aunt.

LOOKING AHEAD

My dear Elizabeth:

I was not surprised at your letter nor the avalanche of questions which you poured upon me. You feel lost because you cannot see ahead. Let me help you. You have started these children on the road to reading. What is the goal toward which you are working? You want them to be:

Thoughtful readers

Expressive readers

Fluent readers

Independent readers

These four points and one which is more than all of these, you want your little ones to love reading.

The greatest thing which the teacher of any subject can give to her pupils is love of that subject. If a child reads to please you he will read while he is with you; but if you have taught him to love reading you have placed in his heart the thing which will make him continue to read whether you are there or not. No doubt you have thought that this pleasure in reading would come a little later when your children had acquired a vocabulary and were able to read long stories, but by that time it may be too late. The love of reading should begin with the first lesson taught and should continue through each lesson which follows. Do you see the added responsibility which comes with this conception of your work? It means that in preparing your lessons you will say not only, "I must teach these new words to-day," but you will say also, "I must present this lesson in such a way that my children will love to read these new words."

Perhaps right here you may meet a common stumbling block. People say, "If you make things so attractive and sugar-coat all lessons for a child doesn't it unfit him for the time in life when he is sure to meet disagreeable tasks?"

I wonder if there is in the world a task so disagreeable that there has not been sometime,

somewhere, a person who delighted in performing it. Not long ago a dainty little college girl said to me, "Mother is away this week and I am keeping house. You should see my kitchen. I just love to scrub!" Her shining eyes spoke of the joy of accomplishment — of work well done. I thought of the times that I had seen that same light in other eyes — the enthusiasm which comes from a day in the garden, a house put in order, a sidewalk laid, a problem solved. Then I thought of the many persons who had performed these same tasks as drudgery. The **joy of accomplishment** is the great motive behind all successful work. If this is true how can we apply this truth to the training of our children?

Each thing that we teach a child to do and do well is a step toward teaching him to enjoy performing some other task well. Activity is a habit. Inactivity is a habit. The person who does not exercise his mind is ever ready to avoid those things which call for mental effort. It is the student who finds zest in a problem. No task but has some disagreeable features, but when the satisfaction in the fulfilled purpose is great enough, the unpleasantness is forgotten.

No doubt there are those who have received salutary discipline through being compelled to **perform** some distasteful task, but the discipline

would have been even greater if the task had been self imposed. For instance, we think that we do well when we compel a boy to mow the lawn, but when we have trained him to that frame of mind that he voluntarily mows the lawn because he enjoys making the place attractive we have really accomplished something. The same principle applies to reading. When you teach your children to read you do well but when you teach them to love to read you do infinitely better.

Let us go back to the four points of your aim. You want

Thoughtful readers

Expressive readers

Fluent readers

Independent readers

How are you to accomplish this? The first two points go hand in hand for usually the child who has the thought is able to express it. It seems to me that that is the important thing in the teaching of reading, yet, it is where so many fail. The singsong reading — no, not reading, word calling — is not so common as it once was, yet it is still found all too frequently. There is **absolutely no excuse for it**. Do you see how I have emphasized that? Read it again! Forget all else I write, but remember this:

Your children should read their lessons with the same simple, natural expression that you would use in reading them.

Strange, isn't it, that teachers permit the growth of habits in the first months of school that it takes years of patient labor to eradicate later on? Now smooth that ugly wrinkle out of your brow, for this is not the alarming task you are fearing. The road to better reading leads us along green pastures and still waters where it is a delight to travel. You tell me that it has been very pleasant — so far, but you are afraid of rough places ahead. You will not feel that way when you get a broader view of your work. In order to do that I want you to know something of other methods, and of these I shall write you in my next letter.

Your loving Aunt.

METHODS COMPARED

My dear Elizabeth:

In my last letter I promised to tell you something of the methods by which successful teachers have taught children to read. Among the best known are these:

The Alphabet or A B C Method

The Phonic Method

The Sentence Method

The Word Method

The Story Method

THE A B C METHOD

Of course you know something of the time-honored A B C Method but in case your knowledge may be limited perhaps I had better explain that in using this method children are first taught to recognize and name the letters of the alphabet, then to combine these letters into such short words as **hen, boy, dog, run** or **is**. When a number of words have been learned they are used in such brief sentences as,

I see the cat.

The cat can run.

The girl has a doll.

New words and sentences are gradually added and fixed in mind by spelling and reading drills.

THE PHONIC METHOD

The Phonic Method is quite like the A B C Method save that the child is taught to call the letter by its sound instead of its name. This is thought to be easier because some of the letter names (as, for instance h or w) do not suggest the letter sounds. Most phonic methods use the same synthetic process of word building that we find in the A B C Method. After the sounds are taught they are combined into such phonograms as, **am, ap, ade, out, ill, fr, sh, spl**, and then into words. These words are taught

in groups each repeating a familiar phonogram,
as,

hat	made	round
cat	spade	found
fat	wade	ground

The words thus taught are then used in sentences.

THE WORD METHOD

The Word Method uses the word as the starting point. In a first lesson children are taught to recognize a word without first learning the letters or sounds of which it is composed. Such words as **boy**, **play**, **little**, **run** and **jump**, are taught in this way. When several words have been learned they are used in sentences such as,

A boy can run.

A girl can play.

New words are taught daily and added to the words of the reading lesson. Later, pupils are taught to separate words into their sound elements and build new words in the same phonic group.

THE SENTENCE METHOD

The Sentence Method is like the Word Method save that in starting, instead of the letter or the word the teacher presents one or two short sentences for the first reading lesson, as,

I see a flower.

The flower is blue.

The sentences are read to the children who read them in turn, recognizing them by their differences in form. After a number of sentences have been taught, attention is directed to the words and children are taught to recognize them at sight. Phonics are developed by word analysis as in the Word Method.

THE STORY METHOD

The Story Method uses the story as the starting point. At first the whole story is told the children. Then it is divided into sentence groups which are written upon the board or chart. Through interest in the story and repeated readings the children soon memorize the sentences and are able to read the story. Attention is then directed toward certain words to be memorized and later phonics are developed in the same way as in the Word Method.

Children have learned to read and read well by every one of these methods. You will wish to know which one is best suited to your needs. You will see that I have started you with the combined Word and Sentence Method. It may not be the most perfect method but it is a very safe one for an inexperienced teacher.

METHODS COMPARED

You may have wondered, as many another person unfamiliar with the ways of teaching has wondered, why so many have rejected the A B C Method and put another in its place. To the uninitiated the letter A would seem the simplest and therefore the logical starting point, but as I explained previously the letter A is not so simple to a child as it is to us. As you probably know, each idea that comes to a little child is fixed in mind through association with an experience. The letters of the alphabet being pure symbols do not recall to the mind of the child any former experience with which they may be associated. You can readily see that the spoken word, **doll**, immediately calls up a mental picture of a doll by which the printed word may be fixed in mind, but the sound A means nothing to a child and so calls up no picture. Children can learn these abstract facts, but they are much more difficult to learn than the facts which are within the range of a child's experience. In the days when the alphabet method was in general use, it was nothing unusual for a child to spend his entire first school year acquiring the alphabet.

The difficulty in starting is not the only objection to this method. When we teach a

child new words by putting together the letters of which they are composed, we help him to form the habit of giving more attention to the word form than to the word meaning. This is one of the worst faults in beginners and causes the stumbling, hesitating reading so hard to overcome. Of course a child will have to learn the letters and the sounds which they represent before he has progressed very far on the road to reading, but that should come only after he has learned to read words and groups of words at a glance. I have taken pains to explain this to you in detail because you are apt to meet even to-day some patron who will feel that modern methods are not so satisfactory as the old A B C Method.

Phonic methods have much the same faults as the A B C Method. Phonics have their place and a most important one but they should be kept in the background till children have formed the habit of word recognition.

THE WORD AND SENTENCE METHOD

The Word and Sentence Method may be at fault if children are kept too long on separate words or isolated sentences. Kitten is a word which attracts most children. **The Kitten is gray** is a sentence which may hold the attention

for a time, but genuine interest is not awakened till we reach the sentence group, as,

This is Kitty Gray.

Kitty Gray runs away.

I have a bell.

The bell says, "Tinkle, tinkle."

The bell is for Kitty Gray.

The Story Method is excellent in that it utilizes this appeal of the sentence group, but even the simplest story will require the use of more new words than it is possible for a child to master in two or three lessons and he is apt to tire of the story before the vocabulary is established. So you see there are pitfalls in all methods but we will try to avoid them. Now I know that you want a few definite directions for going on with your work.

You say that you have taught sixteen words. You might go on indefinitely in the same manner, but a new way of presenting the lesson stirs up interest and so enables children to acquire new words with greater rapidity and ease.

ACTION WORK

One of the best means at this time is through action work or written commands. So far your children have been taught to **look and say**. Now they will learn to **look and do**.

Aside from the interest that it creates this work is valuable in helping a child to keep the right attitude toward his reading material — that is, that each line has a personal message to him.

Write upon the board the single word, **clap**. Tell the children that you are going to use this means of telling them what to do. Then write **stop** and say, "This is 'stop' and tells you when to stop clapping." Alternate the written commands **clap** and **stop**, having the children follow. Write rapidly and erase as soon as the children see what you have written. In other lessons use such words as **run, jump, skip, hop, tap** and **play**. Children may be taught to do these things lightly and quietly, in a way that will not disturb the others. You will find these lessons bristling with interest and children will get new words given in this way very rapidly. It is a game to them, and whenever you can call the Spirit of Play to your assistance you will find her a valuable ally.

I have not time for more now but will write you in a very few days for it is high time that your little people should be starting on their phonics.

Your loving Aunt.

TEACHING KEY WORDS AND
SOUNDS

My dear Elizabeth:

Thoughtful readers

Expressive readers

Fluent readers

Independent readers

You see, I am not going to let you forget your aims and purposes. I have not yet had time to explain to you just how you are to accomplish it; I will come to that presently. In the meantime I must give you more definite instruction for the work at hand.

So far, your children have had to depend upon you for each new word. They will have to do this until they learn that letters are symbols of certain sounds which combine to form the spoken word. They do not need to know the names of the letters in order to do that. It is easier to teach the sound alone. There are two commonly used methods of doing this. As I have already explained, the letter alone means nothing to a child and he will have difficulty in remembering it unless it is associated with something known. One way is to compare each sound to some sound with which the child is already familiar, as **T** to the tick of a watch, **M** to the hum of a top.

Another way is to recognize the letter by associating it with some known word in which it is the initial letter. I have used both methods and both are good. However, in the first instance the child remembers the sound by associating it with a former experience. In the second instance he remembers the sound by associating it with another symbol. I find that children retain longer those memories which come to them through association with experience. So, as far as possible, I teach the sounds by comparing them to some sound with which the children are familiar. When I know of no familiar sound that is like the sound of the letter I wish to teach, I use a key word.

SOUNDS AND KEY WORDS

The following list of sounds and key words may prove helpful to you.

By sounds:

- c — sound of choking
- f — cross cat
- g — frog
- h — panting dog
- m — cow
- o — mother warning Baby
- r — growl of dog
- s — steam from engine

t — tick of clock
v — hum of trolley wire
w — wind
z — hum of bee

By words:

b — baby
d — dog
a — apple
e — egg
i — ink
u — up
j — jump
k — kitty
l — little
n — no
p — pig
q — quick
x — box
y — yes

These lessons should be brief and spirited. It is the vivid impression which counts. Suppose that you wish to teach the sound of the letter **t**. It is not enough to say, "This is the letter which has the same sound as the clock." Interest should first be aroused through some little game or story about the sound.

TEACHING THROUGH THE GAME

You may say for instance,

“Let’s have a little game. This is the ‘still’ game. We will fold our hands and sit so still that there won’t be a sound. No, I heard some one move. Try again. There! That was fine. But do you know when you were all sitting with folded hands there was something in this room that would not be still? I heard it making its little sound. Listen! There it is! Do you hear it? Of course you do. It is the clock saying **T, T, T**, such a soft pretty little sound! Let’s play that we are little clocks and see how we would sound all ticking together — **T, T, T, T, T**. That’s fine! I’m sure that you are not babies if you can tick away like that. I even believe you are almost old enough to learn the same sound which the clock says. Shall I try it here on the board? First the big Mother one stands up straight like this **T, t** — right beside her is her little child and they both say **T, T**, like the clock. Now, let’s see who can point to the letter and make its sound, **T, T, T**. Of course, when you are **older** you will learn to draw a clock face like this, so round with its two hands and the letter printed right beside it. What! You think you can do it now? Well, you may try and when you get it all done I’m

going to catch you in this game because you won't remember what it says."

It is the game in this which makes it enjoyable and helps to fix it in mind. Several times during the day point to the letter and say, "What! you still remember? Well, I'm sure I shall catch you to-morrow!"

Of course, you will not try to use my words. This is merely an example to show you how you can associate some little play with the sound in order that the impression may be vivid and lasting.

TEACHING THROUGH KEY WORDS

When teaching a sound by means of a key word, first be certain that the word is one which is perfectly familiar. Do not use the word which I have suggested when you can find a better one of your own. In choosing your key words be sure to select those which have been easy, as **baby** or **jump**. These call up a definite word picture while such words as **but** and **just** are harder and do not make good key words.

Suppose that you wish to teach the sound of the letter **B**. Write the familiar word, **baby**, upon the board and have children pronounce it with you. Then say, "We will have a hunting game to-day. We are going to hunt for the

sound of the first letter in this little word. See! I shall write it here upon the board all by itself. Who can tell me what it says? No one? Too bad! It is hiding away in this little word and we shall have to find it. Let's all say the word just as slowly as we can. "B-a-b-y." Did you feel the way that your lips came together just then? Try it again. Why, you are fine hunters! That little sound cannot hide away from you much longer. Say it again! Has some one found it now? That's it! **B-B-B.** Now that we have found it we won't let it hide away again. I will write it here upon the board — the big Mother and the little baby one. Right above it I will write the word, **baby**, and if you should forget the sound you will say the word, **baby**, and that will help you to find it again."

RAPID SIGHT DRILLS

When you have taught several sounds make yourself a set of cards about 6x10 inches out of manila board. With dark crayon or a heavy drawing pencil write your key word with its letter upon one of these. These cards will be a help in giving rapid sight drills and when not in use should be placed about the room where children may refer to them. These phonic drills should not be work at all, just a happy

playtime. Never have drills long — five or ten minutes is ample time. Come to the drill with a definite purpose, know what you expect to accomplish, but let the children feel that it is play. You can work these little drills in at all sorts of odd moments, after a study period, when they need a little change or while they are waiting for others to get ready or a gong to sound.

ACTION AND INTEREST

I am sure that you enjoy your action work. Let me give you a little more. So far you have used only verbs but now you will find these exercises helpful in teaching various words. Bring in a small basket of objects whose corresponding nouns are among the words of your primer. For instance, a red ball, a blue ball, some artificial flowers and leaves (unless you have the fresh ones), a doll, a top, a book. Now you are ready for a fine lesson.

Write directions as:

Get a ball.

Get a blue ball.

Get a red ball.

Get a doll.

Get a red flower.

and let the children perform them. After performing the act let a child read his sentence

from the board. Little by little you may add the children's names to these exercises, as:

Get a ball, Mary.

Get a book, John.

Let each child have one of the manila cards with his name written upon it to keep on his desk. These may be outlined with corn or other small objects, or you may show a child how to trace the outline with the index finger and then turn the card over and see how much of the name he can trace without the lines to guide him. In a very short time each child will be able to recognize his own name.

You ask me about teaching **The** and **A** so that the children will read them naturally and not stumble over them. The best thing to do with those troublesome little words is to ignore them. The less attention paid to them, the less trouble you will have. Children are not apt to mention them if you do not. Never put them on the board excepting in a sentence. Then when you read them to the children glide over them as if your whole thought was centered on the word following. Do you remember when primers were arranged,—

Cat.

A cat.

A fat cat.

Is it any wonder that children read,—
I — see — a — cat,
and felt that they had mastered the lesson?

But to go on with the action lessons. Just a few more suggestions and I am sure that you will be able to compose your own lessons. Let your list of words from the primer be your guide, though when you need them to add interest to your lesson it is all right to introduce a few others. As your vocabulary increases you will use such sentences as:

Give me a ball.
Get the ball, May.
Give it to John.
Find a little doll.
Give it to Helen.
Sing to the doll, Helen.
Run to the door, Phil.
Run back to me.

Later you will be able to have lessons of this type:

I am thinking of something.
It is brown.
It has two brown eyes.
It is pretty.
It has four feet.
It can run and jump and play.
It likes to bark.
What is it?

Children love this kind of a lesson and are breathless with eager interest to see who can guess the riddle.

Another pleasing exercise is to tell a little story bringing in familiar words as:

Once I had a little **doll**.

Her name was **Mary**.

Her eyes were **blue**.

Her hair was **yellow**.

All but the words in black type are spoken. These latter being known to the class are not spoken but written upon the board as the story proceeds.

I think you now have enough suggestions on action work to carry you past the time when it will be of much service to you.

In all of this it is the interest aroused which will determine the quality of your work. We talk of teaching our children to concentrate. It is my conviction that voluntary concentration for any length of time is practically impossible for children. **The only true concentration is involuntary and its source is interest.** The appeal of the lesson to child nature is the secret of progress in primary reading. "Appetite before food" is as true of the mind as it is of the body, and the child who learns most is the one whose lessons have been made so attractive that

he reaches for them with loving eagerness,—that he thinks of them and talks of them not only in class time but at home, at play, or wherever he may be. Word-getting is necessary, the mechanics of reading are of course most important, but do not become so engrossed with these minor details that you neglect to develop in your children an appreciation of the joy that awaits them in the land of books.

Your loving Aunt.

SMOOTHING OUT THE ROUGH PLACES

My dear Elizabeth:

What! My little girl in the dumps! Don't you know that a fit of the blues is a luxury which you should have flung to the winds when you entered upon your career as a teacher? So you are "a failure," your children "do not go ahead fast enough" and they "do not remember anything." Well, what a dreadful state of affairs! It is a wonder that the parents have not demanded your resignation.

Come out and enjoy the sunshine. Those clouds are not worth while. You will learn that these beginners are odd little people.

They seem to know a thing so well to-day and by to-morrow one would think that they had

never heard of it. The interesting part of it is that the time when the principal or some parent drops in to see what kind of work you are doing is the moment they choose to display this peculiar blankness. But don't you believe it. They have not really forgotten. It is stored away somewhere in their little heads as another drill or two will show.

TEACHING DIFFICULT WORDS

Probably you have been at fault too. Whenever your children have a period of forgetfulness pay a little more attention to reviews. Of course you keep a list of all words learned and go over it in rapid sight drill at least once every day. There are certain words that are always hard for children to remember,—words like **with, this, them, there**, which do not call up any definite word picture. These are much better taught in sentences in relation with other words. Suppose, for instance, that you want to teach **with**. Prepare such an exercise as this:

Come with me.

Run with me.

Play with me.

Play with John.

Run with John.

Hop with Mary.

Sing with Mary.

Play with a doll.

Play with a ball.

Instead of being acted out this exercise may be read through rapidly by the class and by individuals. It will be worth much more than any amount of drill on **with** alone. For **this** try this exercise:

This is my ball.

It is red.

This is your ball.

It is yellow.

This is John's ball.

It is green.

This is Phil's ball.

It is blue.

Perhaps, like many beginners, you feel that long words are hard words. Many of these would be confusing, no doubt, but a few are a delight. Some day just try the children on **automobile** and see how they take to it. Say, for instance, "I had a new word this morning but it is too hard. I can't give it to you. Too bad! I'll have to think of something easy. I do wish that you could learn this hard word but it is so long. Just see how long it is (writing). There! **Automobile** — you can't remember that! What! you do? Well, you

can't remember it in sentences anyway." Write:

See my automobile.

See my red automobile.

Three minutes drill and you have added a new word to your list and one which will not be forgotten.

If you feel that your children do not get on rapidly enough it may be that you are not using every moment to the best advantage. It is so easy to waste time in school through lack of preparation. Every night after school you should plan carefully each period of the next day's work. In that quiet time by yourself you think of things that would never come to you in the busy schoolroom. Do not try to carry them in your mind. Have a generous notebook and write your plans in detail. Even the sentences which you wish to use as rapid sight work may be written on a slip of paper and held in your hand at recitation time. They will be better in their composition and more satisfactory in their results if composed before, and you will not be taking the precious moments of the recitation thinking what to write next. Of course, if something better comes to your mind the next morning you are always free to use it.

Once more let me take you back to the first point in our aim,—

Thoughtful Readers

If one point could be more important than the rest it is this one. To gain the thought from the printed page is the object of reading. We know that many lessons are taught when this is not accomplished at all and such lessons are worse than failures. The perfect naming of words is worthless if those words do not convey the thought intended. In the anxiety to acquire new words it is very easy to let children get this wrong attitude toward their reading material. One of the best ways of avoiding this is through silent reading. Use much of this every day. For instance, write upon the board, using only words that the children know, such sentences as these:

Do you like me?

I like you.

Look questioningly at the children, but do not say a word. You can tell from the responsive smile which ones have the thought. Erase the sentences and write others. As soon as the vocabulary permits, write a very simple little lesson of six or seven related sentences. Have them concealed behind a curtain. Remove the curtain and without a word give the children a

smile or a nod through which they may understand that this little lesson is now theirs to enjoy. Point slowly along each line watching their faces to be sure that they are following. When they have finished replace the curtain and turn to something else.

Children love these lessons and an occasional bright picture pasted lightly to the board adds greatly to the interest. Let them feel that behind the curtain is a little treat for them.

CONSTANT, THOROUGH REVIEWS

Word-getting should never be the end and aim of the reading lesson, yet nothing is so detrimental to good reading as a lot of half learned words. I cannot tell you too often that reviews must be constant and thorough. You will have to use your ingenuity to keep them varied and snappy, otherwise the children may lose interest. Here are a few suggestions:

Write a list of words upon the board.

Have the class read it in concert.

Have the boys read it.

Have the girls read it.

Have individuals read it.

Or have words written on a ladder.

See who can climb the ladder naming the words.

Sometimes play there is a fire and let them race up the ladder and down again.

Have many words written on the board. Let each child name and erase three.

Other devices will come to you as you work. There are devices, too, which, outside of the regular lesson, help to increase the vocabulary.

Try this: Bring into the schoolroom some object or picture of an object in which the children will be interested. Place it in some conspicuous place in the room and attach to it a large card bearing its name. Say nothing of it, but when the children come in you will see by their knowing smiles that they appreciate it. After a day or two try the word in your reading lesson and you will find that it is known.

Suppose for instance that some afternoon the children tumble in, wild with excitement over an organ grinder and monkey that have appeared in the neighborhood. Do not be so tied to your program that you cannot take advantage of any circumstance which may arise. Eyes are shining and hands waving in their eager desire to tell you all about it. What do you do? Send them to their books? Insist upon your customary quiet? Draw down the curtains for fear the children may catch another glimpse of the

tiresome monkey? I am afraid that some teachers might feel that such was their duty, but you will find in this your golden opportunity.

Interest, your Royal Helper, has come unbidden to your door this day. Instead of closing it in her face, draw her in and let her do your work for you. How easy it is to go seeking her in byways, not seeing that all of the time she is in our midst.

Perhaps you will have a guessing lesson, as,
I am thinking of something.

It is little.

It is brown.

It has a red cap.

Or you may prefer,

What do you think I saw?

A little brown monkey.

You may be able to work in the very words intended for this lesson, but do not sacrifice your story for that. Watch your children, know what they are thinking about. You will find it far better to bring your work down to their interests wherever that is possible, than to expect them always to rise to yours.

Another great help is the use of simple rhymes — Mother Goose Jingles or kindergarten songs.

Write an easy one upon the board. Read it over and over to the children. Let them go over it with you. Leave it upon the board for a week or more. Children love these little verses and they gain new words from them with astonishing rapidity.

You will soon take up your books and before you do that it will be wise to make the change from script to print. The printing outfits with letters one inch high are not expensive. If you have one get a dozen or more sheets of manila board 24x30 inches. On these print very simple lessons of familiar words. If you haven't the outfit print these lessons upon the blackboard. The change from script to print is not a hard one and your little ones are nearing the happy day when each child may have his first book.

Your loving Aunt.

GETTING GOOD EXPRESSION

My dear Elizabeth:

In my last letter I endeavored to show you two ways of accomplishing your first aim,

Thoughtful Readers:

Silent reading.

Thorough word drills.

Now we will turn to the second point in your aim:

Expressive Readers

I have already mentioned the habit of word calling,— how unnecessary it was and how difficult to overcome once the habit was formed.

The best way to avoid this is by never allowing a child to express a thought until he has it in his mind: that is, have him read through a sentence silently before he reads it aloud. How do you and I read with good expression? We look ahead and while our lips are saying one thing our eyes are reading another and our minds adjusting the meaning and guiding our voices to the proper inflection. Think of expecting a complicated operation like that of beginners! They simply cannot do it, and unless we want the halt between the words, we had better have it come between the sentences.

Another great help to better expression is good reading material. Yes, I know, your primers are not very good. They are too hard in the beginning, but you can do much to overcome that. If your books are hard and take up new words too rapidly it simply means that you will have to put more lessons upon the board. Whenever you can, use sentences bring-

ing out contrast; it will help the expression. For instance, instead of:

This is my ball.
It is blue.
I can play with it.

Use:

My ball is blue.
Your ball is red.
Helen's ball is not red.
It is yellow.

SUPPLEMENTARY DRILLS

Supplement the work in the books by little lessons of your own written upon sheets of heavy paper. These may be saved and occasionally passed for sight reading. They should be easier than the regular lesson, and if you put into them sentences which appeal to the child's emotions, you will find them a great aid to expression. Here are a few examples:

How it rains!
How the wind blows!
Now we must stay in the house.
Get your books, boys!
Get your books, girls!
We will play school.

Do you know me?
Do you know my name?
I am Winifred.
I am Ruth's little doll.
Ruth! Ruth!
Come and get me.
Please, please do!
I want to go to sleep.

Dear little baby!
I love you.
I see your soft little hands.
I see your pretty blue eyes.
Shall I rock you, Baby dear?
Shall I sing you to sleep?

Another excellent aid to expression is the dialogue. You can compose these even with a very limited vocabulary.

Closely allied to this is the dramatizing of familiar rhymes. Mother Goose rhymes are full of possibilities. The children will love to repeat and act out Miss Muffet, Boy Blue, and Jack and Jill. And afterwards they will be doubly interested in lessons about their play.

The next point in our aim is:

Fluent Readers

I have written to you of the halt between the words and the halt between the lines. I suppose you would like to know when children are to learn to read without either of them.

The first means is the study or re-reading of the lesson till it is so familiar that there need not be a halt anywhere.

Another help is in the grouping of sentences. It is easier for a child to read eight sentences grouped in twos, than eight sentences equal spaces apart.

Another help to fluency is the habit of phrasing. From the first there are certain sets of words which should be seen and read as one, for instance such words as:

By and by
She said
A little boy
One by one
On the floor

The last point in your aim is:

Independent Readers

I imagine that you are already looking forward to the time when your children will be able to sound out new words for themselves instead

of depending upon you. This, as you know, is to be accomplished through the study of phonics and spelling, of which I will write you more in my next letter. I hope that this brief summary will give you a clear view of your work — that which is past and that which is before you.

THOUGHTFUL READERS

Silent reading
Thorough word drills

EXPRESSIVE READERS

Reading sentence before expressing
Good reading matter with contrasting sentences
Dialogues
Dramatization

FLUENT READERS

Study of lesson
Grouping of sentences
Phrasing

INDEPENDENT READERS

Phonics
Spelling

Among the books in your building there may be some old manuals such as accompany different series of readers. You will find any of them

well worth reading. There is something to take and something to leave in each one of them.

If you ever read or think of anything different from the way that I have told you which appeals to you as helpful do not hesitate to try it. Compare the two methods and use whichever seems best to you. Any method which aids in accomplishing the aim which I have set before you cannot be far wrong.

Your loving Aunt.

COMMON SENSE PHONICS

My dear Elizabeth:

Now comes the miracle, for out of this tiny pygmy which you have started in teaching the elementary sounds, is to grow the giant who will carry the burden of new words for you.

Let this be your rule:

Each day teach something new in phonics.

Each day drill upon all that you have previously taught.

As soon as a sound has been learned place its corresponding letter in a permanent place on the blackboard. Your work with words will be accomplished principally in three ways:

Comparison of words

Analysis of words

Word building

Your children are familiar with the consonant sounds and I am sure that you have had them discover these sounds in new words whenever the opportunity presented. A very easy lesson is the addition of **s** to form the plural, as boy, boys.

Now your children are ready to compare words having the same endings. Suppose that they have had the word **tell**. Write it upon the board, and under it write **bell**, sounding each very slowly and leading the children to see that the same ending gives the same sound. Do the same with other words, always using a familiar word to teach one that is new.

Soon you will be able to put "families" of words upon the board for children to sound, as:

man	will
Dan	hill
Fan	mill
pan	fill

At this time, too, children may be taught to blend two consonants together, as **gl** in glad or **fr** in Frank.

Keep a list containing one word from each

new family learned and have your children go over it daily.

For review work and drill, arrange and copy upon the board such exercises as this:

at	an	bag	bad	and	back
fat	can	rag	had	hand	Jack
mat	man	wag	mad	sand	pack
rat	pan	drag	glad	grand	black
sat	Dan	flag	sad	stand	sack

Arrange similar exercises, using the other short vowels, and later the long vowels.

Arrange and copy such exercises as this:

rat	sad	stop
ran	sat	still
rag	sang	stand
rack	sand	stem
rang	sack	stick

These are good also:

an	at	pan	tap
en	et	pen	tell
in	it	pin	tick
on	ot	pop	top
un	ut	pug	tub

GETTING NEW WORDS FROM THE CONTEXT

I do not consider it wise to give many rules in the first year's work. However, after drill upon such endings as **at, ate; in, ine; op, ope; it**

is well to show the children that the final **e** usually indicates a long vowel. A child who is in the habit of reading for the thought will determine new words from the context and he should be encouraged to do this whenever possible. Often the beginning sound is all that he needs to carry him on, and such a child will read much more intelligently than the child whose mind is taken up with the application of phonic rules.

You will find one difficulty with many. Do not be discouraged if even after they have had quite a little phonic drill and are able to do very good work while you are there pointing it out from the board, they seem disinclined to use that knowledge when alone. You will have to be firm in refusing to tell them any word which they are able to sound for themselves. On the other hand, if a word is hard to sound, as **pigeons** or **said** and a child has forgotten, tell it promptly. Do not waste time with a lot of questions which may lead him to guess it.

After children are perfectly familiar with the sounds of the letters they are ready to learn their names. These they may acquire in a very short time. As you write words or sentences spell each one as if to yourself. After you have done this for several days, have children do it with you. Later write and print the alphabet

upon the board and teach the little song, "A, B, C," pointing to each letter as you name it. In a very short time the children will know the letters and you will be able to add oral spelling to your list of duties.

ACCURACY IN SPELLING

Thus far you have used the visual sense. Now let them use the auditory sense and the muscular sense as well. In written work use the words in sentences as much as possible. Then in rapid drill have children spell words orally both in concert and individually. There is only one aim in spelling, and that is **absolute accuracy**. Keep a list of words and by frequent reviews, be sure that each child knows them. Better fifty words learned perfectly than five hundred which are only guessed at.

Let me give you a few suggestions for conducting your reading lessons. If it is possible, make two divisions of your class, having at least two-thirds of your pupils in the strongest division. This will give you the time for individual work with the ones who need it most.

PREPARATION FOR THE LESSON

Precede the reading with a discussion of the lesson. Suppose for instance that your lesson is about the rainbow. Of course your children

have all seen a rainbow and will want to tell the circumstances under which it came. After this you will question them regarding the cause and nature of the rainbow, and if you have been careful in your preparation, you will have a prism upon your desk ready to place in the sunlight. Then you will recall for the children some of the lovely things which our poets have said of the rainbow. Perhaps there will not be time for it just now, but you can at least promise the story of the first rainbow and God's promise to Noah for the next story hour.

TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO STUDY

With all of this preparation I am sure that it will be an eager little class of children turning to their books to find what more can be learned upon this fascinating subject. If possible let all read the lesson silently. At first do not pay any attention to word difficulties but let several tell what they have read. Then if some failed to read it, find out why and place the difficult words upon the board for pronunciation. Once again let all read the lesson silently, and at last you are ready for your oral reading.

This, of course, takes time but if you are careful to use it wisely and hold children to the subject, it is time well spent. A child who

approaches his lesson in this way will realize that his object is to enjoy and understand what the page has to tell him and not merely to show how well he can pronounce the words. Oral reading is secondary but it is important too, and you should spare no pains to have children express themselves naturally and freely. They are natural imitators so it is a good plan to read to them frequently, both their own lessons and short stories from other books.

From the first try to have children see the lessons as a united whole. Do not form the habit of calling a sentence a "story." As the lessons become longer it will not be possible for each child to read the whole lesson. The custom of "reading around" has been criticised but used occasionally it awakens interest.

Sometimes let the child who reads pass to the front and face the class. A very little concert reading is not a bad thing and lends variety. Or let the boys read one paragraph and the girls the next.

An occasional volunteer lesson is interesting. Let the class stand. Any child may read and be seated after his paragraph. Others follow in the same way till all have read. Or let the child who reads choose the one who is to follow him.

Your loving Aunt.

CONTINUING THE WORK

My dear Elizabeth:

I cannot tell you how I have enjoyed your bright, happy letters. I know that you have found your calling for the joy of your work overrides its fatigue. You must be tired, too. Your year has not been all play for no teacher ever plants a thought in the heart of another without giving with it some part of her vital self.

There is one thing more for you to do in order that the next teacher may build intelligently upon the work which you have done. You plan to be back there next year but a long summer intervenes and we never know what may happen, so it is better to leave a careful record of the work that you have been over. Make a list of the books that the children have read, the phonic drills and the words that they can spell.

Suggest that the first work in the fall be the re-reading of the last book that they read in the spring. They will go ahead stronger for the review.

You tell me that excepting two who have been out a great deal and will have to take the work over your children all read well. Think what

this means! You have done your part and your children are well on their way toward high school. Do you realize the tremendous importance of good reading and the part that it plays in each person's life? Go into the third and fourth grades and you will nearly always find two or three who cannot read. They are older than the rest for they have been held back year after year because of poor reading. What is the matter? It is not because they could not learn, for they are not always dull children. Where was the fault? It must have been back there in the beginning somewhere for they do not read as well as a child should read on leaving the first grade. What happens? They hate school. They hate everything that pertains to books, and just as soon as it is possible they drop out of school and join the ranks of the illiterate — the unenlightened.

You have taught forty little children to read well. Probably most of them would have learned to read sooner or later even if your work had been very poor, but I do not doubt that there are several of these same children to whom the difference between a wrong start and a right start means the difference between illiterate strugglers and intelligent, useful citizens. Think of the responsibility! Think too

of the joy of rendering such a service not only to the individual child but to the whole commonwealth! Let me tell you a story. It is true. I do not doubt that there are many similar cases of which we never hear.

A number of years ago there was a little family of good substantial people. The father worked hard and paid his bills, and the mother stayed at home and took care of her children. From the first, little Mary had troubles in school. I do not know why. It was not that she was dull. Far from it, and her first teacher was a bright and clever woman. At any rate, Mary could not learn to read. She took her book home and in the evenings her older brothers helped her as best they could. While her mother ironed little frocks or rolled out biscuits, Mary sat beside her and pored over her reading lesson. She struggled through the second and third grades. She stumbled through the fourth. She hated school and longed for the day when its summoning call would no longer be for her. It was a discouraged, unhappy child who entered the fifth grade under the care of Miss Andrews — a young lady who loved both children and good literature.

It is Mary's side of the story that I am telling so I cannot say what possibilities the teacher

saw in the little girl that the other teachers had not seen. She made a companion of her, found excuses to keep her after school and told her stories, stories, stories! When the time was ripe she told her the story of Evangeline and they read it together. It was Mary's first book. Before that it had been words — nothing but words. Over and over she read the beautiful story whose romance and tender pathos appealed to the heart of the child. Other books followed and Mary entered the sixth grade one of the best of her class.

Miss Andrews was called elsewhere, but her work went on. From that time Mary went steadily forward. She finished high school and graduated from college first in her class. She is to-day a woman honored in her profession and beloved by all who know her. Her influence is far reaching and hundreds of people look to her with gratitude for the inspiration and help which she has been to them.

Of course there was the material to work on, and the good home and faithful mother back of it all, yet it took the teacher to forge the link which bound the chain together. Somewhere in the world there is one who does not know all this — yet it came about because she stood ready at the right moment to teach something that

did not appear in the course of study, because she was willing to give her time and thought to work that was not named in the contract. In other words because she was a Teacher.

God bless you, dear, in your chosen work.

Your loving Aunt.



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